

Chapter No. 2146  
19/SS26/R1313  
LR 17B/RC

***SENATE  
CONCURRENT RESOLUTION  
No. 599***

Originated in Senate

*J. W. Welch*

Secretary

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 599

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND CONGRATULATING THE 2019 MISSISSIPPI PRUDENTIAL SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY AWARD WINNERS: JOSEPH VOYNIK (STATE HONOREE), KEEGAN FIGUEROA (STATE HONOREE), ANNABELLE BUNCH (DISTINGUISHED FINALIST), SHELBY COOPER (DISTINGUISHED FINALIST), HAYES LESYER (DISTINGUISHED FINALIST), AND MARLIE MCCLUNG (DISTINGUISHED FINALIST).

WHEREAS, the prestigious 2019 Prudential Spirit of Community Award, now in its 24th year, presented by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, honors young volunteers across America who have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to serving their communities; and

WHEREAS, these are Mississippi's Top Youth Volunteers of 2019:

- High School State Honoree: Joseph Voynik, nominated by Jackson Preparatory School.

Joseph, a senior at Jackson Preparatory School, worked for four years and raised more than \$600,000.00 to construct a fully accessible baseball field so that children with disabilities could

experience the joy of playing America's national pastime. Joseph has always been aware of the obstacles faced by people with disabilities; when his mother was in high school, a car accident paralyzed her from the waist down. "I noticed that people with disabilities often do not have the same opportunities as the able-bodied," Joseph said. While watching a major league baseball game on TV in 2014, he saw a commercial about the Miracle League. "It was the first time I had ever seen children with disabilities experience the joy and excitement of playing baseball on an accessible field," he said. Joseph immediately wanted to get involved, but soon discovered that there was not a single fully accessible field in Mississippi for players with disabilities. So he decided he would build one. Joseph first shared his idea with classmates at school, who helped organize a one-mile run that raised \$10,000.00 for his cause. With his parents' help, he established the Miracle League of Central Mississippi, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, and then persuaded a neighboring town to provide a site. Over the next few years, Joseph solicited donations from businesses and foundations and promoted his project via a website and social media. After raising hundreds of thousands of dollars, he helped plan and oversee the construction of the field itself, with a rubberized surface and wheelchair-accessible dugouts. Mississippi's first Miracle League baseball field opened on April 20, 2018, and hosted six teams in its first season. "I believe this field and league of players has opened the hearts and eyes of

many in the community to see all that these disabled players can accomplish when given the opportunity," said Joseph.

- Middle Level State Honoree: Keegan Figueroa, nominated by Williams-Sullivan Elementary School in Durant.

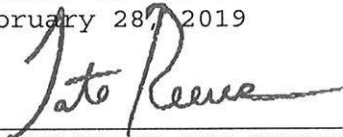
Keegan, an eighth-grader at Mooreville Middle School, helped collect almost 30,000 pounds of basic necessities and deliver them to Puerto Rico a month after Hurricane Maria devastated the island. Keegan's father was born in Puerto Rico and lived there until he was 16. "Most of his family still lives there," said Keegan, who has visited the island several times. "When the hurricane hit, I was terrified," he said. "I instantly knew that I wanted to help." As in many disaster situations, it took several days for Keegan's family to make contact with relatives there. Thankfully, they were all safe, he said, but many had lost almost everything, and they had no access to water or electricity. To help the family's efforts in delivering supplies to Puerto Rico, Keegan decided to get students at his school involved in the cause. He posted flyers and posters that explained what items were needed and placed donation boxes at every entrance to the school. Keegan and his family also solicited help from churches, clubs and organizations, as well as local businesses. After donations such as medicine, hygiene products, diapers, baby formula, batteries and generators were stored in the Figueroa garage, Keegan organized a group of 20 friends to come and pack the items into boxes. Once Keegan and his father arrived in

society depend, in great measure, upon the dedication of these young Mississippi citizens, who use their considerable talents and resources to serve others:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING THEREIN, That we do hereby commend and congratulate the 2019 Mississippi Prudential Spirit of Community Award Winners: Joseph Voynik (State Honoree), Keegan Figueroa (State Honoree), Annabelle Bunch (Distinguished Finalist), Shelby Cooper (Distinguished Finalist), Hayes Lesyer (Distinguished Finalist), and Marlie McClung (Distinguished Finalist), and extend to these honorees and their families the best wishes for success in their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be presented to Mississippi's Top Youth Volunteers and made available to the Capitol Press Corps.

ADOPTED BY THE SENATE  
February 28, 2019

  
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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

ADOPTED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
March 12, 2019

  
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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES